

Remarks

1. Claims 4 to 7 have been amended to alter their claims dependencies. Otherwise the claims are previously as presented since, in the applicants' opinion, the claims define an invention which is neither anticipated nor rendered obvious by the prior art of record.
2. The Examiner continues to reject claims 1 and 3 to 8 under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by US5844982 (Knittl). Applicants respectfully disagree for the reasons contained in the following submission. Applicants also retain as pertinent at least that part of applicant's submission comprising sections 6 to 9 of the Remarks section of the response dated December 1, 2005.
3. In the present invention as defined by claim 1, the source contact center sends a reservation request to each of the contact centers including itself. In the "Response to Arguments", section 9 of the Office Action being addressed, the Examiner acknowledges that Knittl discloses for an incoming call to the communications system (source contact center) for which there is no longer a free agent in the allocated group of this communication system (source contact center), requests are formed and transmitted to other communications systems (other contact centers). The Examiner further states that the implications of what is disclosed in the system and method of Knittl suggest that after an initial search for a free agent in the original communication system, read as the claimed source contact center, additional requests are communicated to other communication systems (other contact centers). It is indeed clear from Knittl that, after the initial search for a free agent reveals no free agent in the original communication system (source contact center), the original system then and only then issues additional requests for a free agent to other communication systems (other contact centers). Knittl discloses an overflow system or an exclusive system in which an original communication

system (source contact center) attempts to satisfy contacts requiring a free agent received at that system, but if it is unable to do so, it then seeks the assistance of other communication systems (other contacts centers), but effectively excludes itself from the subsequent group process.

4. The Examiner contends that since the original communication system (of Knitl) searches for a free agent within its own communication system, this is read as the claimed sending a reservation request from the source contact center to itself. However, given the Examiner's own analysis of the disclosure of Knitl in which the Examiner identifies that it is only after an initial step of searching for an agent in the original communication system that said system then generates additional requests to send to other systems, it must be concluded that the Examiner's contention that Knitl discloses "*sending a reservation request from the source contact center to each of the contact centers including itself*" has been arrived at with the impermissible use of hindsight.

5. The Examiner himself recognizes that Knitl discloses a two step process. Using the language of the present invention merely by way of comparison with Knitl, it can be said that the two step process of Knitl comprises a first step in which a contact received at the source contact center is processed to determine the presence of a free agent in the source contact center and, if the result is negative, a second step is then performed whereby the source contact center then generates additional requests to send to other contact centers to determine if any can provide a free agent. Consequently, it can be seen that Knitl does not disclose the feature of "*sending a reservation request from the source contact center to each of the contact centers including itself*".

6. The present invention teaches a single step process, namely "*sending a reservation request from the source contact center to each of the contact centers including itself*". It is inherently implicit from the language of claim 1 that the

reservation request is sent *at the same time* from the source contact center to each of the other contact centers including itself. While the applicants do not consider that amendment of claim 1 is necessary, the applicants are willing to consider amending claim 1 to include this limitation if this would expedite prosecution of this application.

7. Not only does Knittl not anticipate the present invention as defined by claim 1, but it teaches away from the solution disclosed by the present invention. The present invention teaches a system in which all contact centers are included in satisfying contacts requiring a free agent, including the source contact center which received the contact. This is achieved by the source contact center sending a reservation request (*at the same time*) from the source contact center to each of the other contact centers including itself. In contrast, Knittl teaches a system in which other contact centers are not involved in initially attempting to satisfy a contact's request for a free agent until such time as it has been determined that the source contact center cannot itself satisfy such a request. Thus, the time to process received contacts is greater and load balancing between contact centers is not as efficient as that provided by the system of the present invention.

8. In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that claim 1 is not anticipated by or rendered obvious by the disclosure of Knittl.

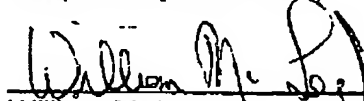
9. The foregoing submission is equally applicable to remaining independent claims which, by consequence are also not anticipated by or rendered obvious by the disclosure of Knittl.

10. The Examiner's rejection of dependent claims is moot in view of the above submission.

11. Favorable reconsideration of the claims is respectfully requested.

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Respectfully submitted,



William M. Lee, Jr.
Registration No. 26,935
Barnes & Thornburg LLP
P.O. Box 2786
Chicago, Illinois 60690-2786
(312) 214-4800
(312) 759-5646 (fax)

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